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JOHNSON AND SAVAGE.

RICHARD SAVAGE serves in England as the type of a wretched man of letters; not that he was singular in this respect, but that the friendship of Johnson has caused the particulars of his life and habits to be recorded with more than usual minuteness. His biography by the great lexicographer is still in some repute; more read, as well as more praised, than any other of its author's productions of that class. I was lately surprised, however, on an accidental re-perusal of it, after an interval of many years, to find so much in this narrative that appeared to me unsatisfactory. I shall endeavour, though it is almost like broaching a heresy, to show wherein I think it defective.

Savage, as is well known, came into the world (1697) under peculiar circumstances. In order to be divorced from a husband with whom she lived unhappily, the Countess of Macclesfield told a tale of infamy against herself. Her child, born soon after, and who otherwise would have been in time an English peer, was reared at a distance from her, in obscurity, and under strict care that he should never know his real origin. He received, nevertheless, a good education at a private school. It was while serving as apprentice to a shoemaker, that he discovered by accident that he had received his birth, not from the poor woman who had reared him, but from a lady of brilliant rank, who lived in affluence in the west end of London. Curiosity, ambition, perhaps some working of the natural affections, then led him to make an effort to see his real parent; but she never could be induced to grant him an interview. The poor youth used to watch whole evenings in front of her elegant mansion, that he might have the chance of seeing her go out or in, or pass through her lighted apartments; but in vain. Rendered desperate at length, he tried on one occasion to force his way into the house. She either affected or felt alarm at the proceeding, screamed to alarm her servants and neighbours, and poor Savage was thrust into the street without accomplishing his object. So far from affording him any countenance or kindly support, she attempted to get him kidnapped and sent away as a slave to the colonies. Johnson tells these and many other particulars of the conduct of this unnatural mother, but leaves her to be regarded as a mere anomaly or monster in human form. It is, however, always desirable to see motives or prompting causes for extraordinary actions; and it seems strange that Johnson should have been unable to conjecture why his mother acted differently from her sex in general. It does not now seem difficult to suppose that the countess regarded her child, from the first, as a memento of painful circumstances in her own life, and shrunk from giving a being invested with such distressing associations. She might think it better for him to regard

himself as of humble, than of infamous extraction. When he afterwards became troublesome to her, and likely to revive her sad story before the world, she might be driven, in a paroxysm of selfish feeling, to wish him out of the country. This is not to excuse the unhappy woman; it is only an attempt to detect the workings of natural passions in her bosom as a cause for her actions. We must at the same time, in simple justice, keep in mind that the whole story has been handed down to us by the enemies of the countess.

Savage, when he learned what he really was, worked no more. He had education and abilities which were enough in themselves to have put him above a humble trade. Ambition and love of self-indulgence now determined him into that false position which, with his own bad passions, was the cause of his misery through life. With an excuse for considering himself unfortunate, and constant hopes of *something being done for him* on that account, he put common means of livelihood out of consideration. Sir Richard Steele took him by the hand—a bad Mentor, though a kindly and well-meaning one. Under his care, Savage began, before twenty, to write poems and plays. When, in consequence of ridiculing his patron behind his back, he lost his friendship, Mrs Oldfield the actress became his friend, and agreed, from pure generosity, to give him fifty pounds a-year till he should be better provided for. The beneficence of these amiable people is praised by Johnson, without his seeing that it must have fatally encouraged Savage in the irresponsibility he felt with regard to his own support. On giving proof of his abilities by a play on the story of Sir Thomas Overbury, many other persons of eminence became his friends; and he realised a hundred pounds by the work when published, ten guineas being derived from its dedication to a man of fortune. The story of the young poet was now known. Unluckily, his friends encouraged him in a disposition to trade upon it, by way of making up for the heartlessness of his mother, and as a kind of revenge against her. When it was narrated by a friend in a periodical publication of the day, with a request that persons commiserating the hero should send contributions for him to Button's Coffeehouse, seventy guineas were deposited there in the course of a few days. A duke remarked that Savage should be looked upon as an injured nobleman, and supported accordingly by his own class. The biographer tells all this, but makes no remark on the possibility of his hero maintaining a truer dignity by supporting himself, and sinking the birth which could reflect upon him no honour.

Supported chiefly by the bounty of others, and making a very imprudent use of any resources of his own, Savage advanced to thirty years of age, when he was tried for murder. He and two friends, having sat up till midnight drinking, went into a house of ill fame at

Charing Cross, and stumbled into an apartment already occupied by a party. One of Savage's friends chose deliberately to commence a quarrel with these people, by kicking over their table. In the confused contest which ensued, Savage wounded a Mr Sinclair in such a way that he died next day. A more wanton piece of mischief than the whole conduct of Savage's party could not have been exhibited. Savage was condemned to be executed. A pardon was interceded for, and, *notwithstanding opposition from his mother*, obtained. It certainly was right that he should not have suffered for murder; but it seems equally clear that a free pardon was a great stretch of mercy in a case of such culpable homicide. Yet strange to say, Johnson presumes that 'his memory may not be much sullied by his trial;' as if it was enough that he had not killed a fellow-creature out of deliberate malice. One can go along with the biographer in a more placid humour when he relates a subsequent act of his hero. 'Some time after he had obtained his liberty, he met in the street the woman who had sworn with so much malignity against him. She informed him that she was in distress, and, with a degree of confidence not easily attainable, desired him to relieve her. He, instead of insulting her misery, and taking pleasure in the calamities of one who had brought his life into danger, reproved her gently for her perjury, and changing the only guinea that he had, divided it equally between her and himself.' Johnson adds, 'Compassion was the distinguishing quality of Savage; he never appeared inclined to take advantage of weakness, to attack the defenceless, or to press upon the falling; whoever was distressed, was certain at least of his good wishes; and when he could give no assistance to extricate them from misfortunes, he endeavoured to soothe them by sympathy and tenderness.' The partial biographer at the same time admits that he was implacable in resentment where his pity was not appealed to.

Savage continued for some time to live as he had done before—indebted to the accident of the day for his subsistence, sometimes deriving a little money from his writings or a theatre benefit; at others treated by his friends in taverns; and often retiring from a gay company, whom he had entertained by his wit, to wander, solitary and homeless, through the streets. In Johnson's strong phrase, 'he spent his life between want and plenty—between beggary and extravagance.' What he had, he was tempted to spend foolishly, 'because he always hoped to be immediately supplied.' He would 'purchase the luxury of a single night by the anguish of cold and hunger for a week.' The biographer blames for this the conduct of his friends in treating him at taverns. It does not seem to have occurred to him that the treated party had a power of declining this degradation, and that honest men choose to live otherwise. Yet Savage became anxious for a settled income, and, after all the cruelty of his mother, attempted to extort a provision from her by threatening to harass her with lampoons. Johnson triumphs in the partial success of this expedient; of its essential unworthiness he says not one word. In consequence of Savage's application, Lord Tyrconnel, a friend of the countess, agreed to receive him into his house, and, besides supporting him, give him an allowance of two hundred per annum. He now lived at a regular and luxurious table, with a nobleman, to enjoy whose conversation was, he himself says, 'to be elegantly introduced into the most instructive as well as entertaining parts of literature—to receive from the most unassuming and winning candour the worthiest and most polite maxims.' Here he finished

his longest poem, the *Wanderer*, the copyright of which he sold for ten pounds, because he wanted some trifling gratification which this sum could purchase, and because this was the first offer! Dressing handsomely, living as a kind of unfortunate nobleman, and possessed of literary fame and attractive conversational powers, he was now highly popular. 'To admire Mr Savage was a proof of discernment; to be acquainted with him was a title to poetical reputation. His presence was sufficient to make any place of public entertainment popular; and his approbation and example constituted the fashion. So powerful,' says Johnson, 'is genius when it is invested with the glitter of affluence!' A man of independent mind will of course see that it was not a situation fit to secure real happiness. It was but a gilded servitude at the best, with only one redeeming circumstance for a man of letters—that it afforded opportunities for quiet study, and for the observation of some departments of society not usually very patent to inspection. But if there was anything in it which a virtuous and unassuming student could have profited by, or by which such a person could have made it tolerable, that person was not Richard Savage.

During this externally brilliant period of his life, he published a poem in praise of Sir Robert Walpole, the then all-powerful minister. Its encomiums are in the style of the dedications of that age, although the poet boldly asserts that truth is his sole guide. Now, Johnson quietly tells us that Savage was in the custom of privately speaking of Walpole in a very contemptuous manner. But Walpole sent the poet twenty pounds for his panegyric, and was no doubt expected to send that or something more; and Lord Tyrconnel required his protégé, 'not without menaces,' to write in praise of his leader. In the eyes of the great English moralist, it was all owing to the dependent state of Savage, and this dependence was his misfortune, so that circumstances alone were blameable! The utmost that Johnson can admit is, that 'if his miseries were sometimes the consequences of his faults, he ought not yet to be wholly excluded from compassion, because his faults were very often the effect of his misfortunes'—as if Savage had been under some moral prohibition to work honestly, as other men do, for his own bread! What crime is there for which some such excuse could not be made?

In no long time—we are not exactly informed how long—Lord Tyrconnel discharged Savage from his house, alleging reasons in the poet's own misconduct. Savage, his lordship said, was accustomed to enter taverns with any company that proposed it; there he would drink the most expensive wines with great profusion, and when the reckoning came, he was without money. When his friends paid his share grudgingly, he brought them to Lord Tyrconnel's, where he would entertain them with wines from his lordship's cellars, and disgrace the house with riot and outrage. A set of valuable books which he had bestowed upon Savage, stamped with his arms, he had the mortification to find on stalls exposed to sale, it being Savage's custom, when he wanted a small sum, to take his books to the pawnbroker. On the other hand, the poet alleged that a shabby desire to escape the expense which he occasionally incurred, was Lord Tyrconnel's motive for sending him adrift. The reasons assigned by Lord Tyrconnel agreeing as well with the ordinary habits of Savage, as admitted by Johnson, we may well believe them to have been in the main true. Undoubtedly the gist of the whole matter is, that Savage's recklessly dissolute conduct was incom-

patible with the comfort of a sober gentleman's mansion. Yet still there is nothing from the moralist but pity. It has since become known that Savage wrote to Lord Tyconneil's chaplain, representing his deplorable situation, and petitioning his intercession, in order that he might be taken back. This deprives Savage, of course, of all right to allege faults on his lordship's side. The case had been simply this—an undeserved bounty forfeited by the guilty folly of the receiver.

It was soon after this period that Savage published his most celebrated poem, the *Bastard*, which he dedicated, 'with all due reverence,' to Mrs Brett—such being now the appellation of his mother, in consequence of her having married a gentleman of that name. The piece contains many striking lines, and as it related to his own story, now a pretty notorious one, it met a large sale. Johnson informs us that it had the effect of driving the poet's mother away from Bath, where she was living at the time. The biographer manifestly rejoices in this poem. He quotes, as an apology for Savage, the lines—

No mother's care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer:
No father's guardian hand my youth maintained,
Called forth my virtues, or from vice restrained.

The grossness of the whole matter, the writing of such a piece, and the publishing of it, is unperceived by Johnson. He sees not the ludicrousness of an able, well-educated man of between thirty and forty whining about the hardships of such a peculiar orphanhood. He sees not the utter folly of palliating a homicide committed in a drunken brawl, by reference to any external circumstance whatever. Only one general remark of the nature which justice would require, does he make about this part of Savage's life, where he says, 'By imputing none of his miseries to himself, he continued to act upon the same principles, and to follow the same path; was never made wiser by his sufferings, nor preserved by one misfortune from falling into another.' The fact is, that Johnson himself continually refers Savage's misfortunes, as well as his faults, to others, and but faintly in any case blames the sufferer. To show the mistaking spirit in which he writes, take his remarks on the queen's bounty, in allowing Savage fifty pounds a-year, in requital for a little complimentary poem which he sent annually on her birthday, under the character of the Volunteer Laureate. Caroline, with her characteristic goodness, had permitted Savage to send such a poem. Let any one look at the verses, and then say if her majesty could have had any motive but to befriend one whom she believed to be an unfortunate man of genius. The very first ode, which led to the arrangement, is little but a new deploration on the hackneyed story of his birth. Yet what says Samuel? Her majesty's reception of the poem, 'though by no means unkind, was yet not in the highest degree generous: to chain down the genius of the writer to an annual panegyric, showed in the queen too much desire of hearing her own praises, and a greater regard to herself than to him on whom her bounty was conferred!' Was there ever such miserable drivel as this? though it be a bold word to use towards Johnson. And this writer almost immediately after tells us, without a word of comment, how the wretched volunteer laureate used annually to retire with his fifty pounds to spend it in obscure sensuality, reappearing after a brief space as penniless as usual—for 'Mr Savage had never been accustomed to dismiss any of his appetites without the gratification which they solicited, and 'nothing but want of money withheld him from partaking of every pleasure which fell within his view!' What on earth is this but the very wantonness of prejudice and partiality?

After he had endured some years of penury, a few friends solicited Sir Robert Walpole in his behalf, and obtained a promise of a place for him; but the promise was never fulfilled. It is easy, of course, to see how the minister might pause before trusting any

public function to such a man as Savage; but Johnson sees nothing of the kind. He can only complain that a man of genius should not be supported by some means not of his own earning. The biographer loudly asserts the dignity of many of his friend's sentiments: he loved goodness, it seems, though he did not practise it. He was also inspired by religious sentiments; and at one time contemplated a poem in which the freethinker should be shown going through all the stages of vice and folly, till dismissed from the world by his own hand. Strange that Samuel Johnson should have failed to perceive how little worth is to be attached to such an idea, when he is himself delineating a man of contrary principles, who, nevertheless, goes through that very career in sad reality, excepting only the last particular. Savage was now living a half-outcast life, 'eating only when he was invited to the tables of his acquaintances, from which the meanness of his dress often excluded him.' 'Sometimes he passed the night in mean houses, which are set open at night to any casual wanderers; sometimes in cellars, among the riot and filth of the meanest and most profligate of the rabble; sometimes, when he had not money to support the expenses of even these receptacles, he walked about the streets till he was weary, and lay down in the summer upon a balk, or in the winter, with his associates in poverty, among the ashes of a glass-house.' In such places 'was to be found the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations; the man whose remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senates, and whose delicacy might have polished courts.' Nothing of the kind, I venture to say. The balk and the glass-house never received any such tenant; they only sheltered an unreflecting sensualist and profligate. That any sensible man should have ever seriously spoken of one as possessing 'ideas of virtue, which might have enlightened the moralist,' whom he at the same time represents as indulging himself at all times without the least regard to others, and as utterly without any sense of the decencies of civilised life, is surely most strange.

Johnson now describes Savage as practising for some years the art described in the Vicar of Wakefield—keeping up a subscription for his works, which yet never came out. Whatever he got in this way, even though it might be a benefaction of ten guineas from a liberal nobleman, he immediately spent in luxuries at a tavern, never stopping till it was done. His friends at one time commenced a plan of sending him a guinea every Monday; it was commonly spent before next morning. Wherever he went, his lively conversation gained him new friends and support; but his irregularities quickly disgusted them, so that his only chance lay in a rapid succession of new faces. Amidst all this essential meanness, there was a fiery pride about trifles. When a gentleman, meaning to be of service to him, asked him to call at a particular hour, he took it as an insult. When a few friends proposed to club for a new suit of clothes for him, and sent a tailor to take his measure, he flew into a violent rage, because, forsooth, he had not himself been intrusted with his re-equipment. But Samuel Johnson is hardly more reasonable, as will presently appear.

The last move of Savage's life was in consequence of an association of friends agreeing to allow him fifty pounds a-year, on condition that he would go and live upon it quietly in the country. This led him to Swansea in 1739, having left London with much reluctance. The arrangement, it seems, was not made very readily. 'Such,' says his biographer, 'was the generosity of mankind, that what had been done by a player without solicitation, could not now be effected by application and interest; and Savage had a great number to court and to obey for a pension less than that which Mrs Oldfield paid him without exacting any servilities.' In the name of wonder, how should this have passed for a century, in a popular book, without condemnation?

Is it not, in reality, victimising the worthy and kind-hearted, to exalt the reckless and selfish? Actually, the same page which contains the ungenerous remark, relates that Savage, having got fifteen guineas from these friends for his journey to Bristol, wrote on the fourteenth day, in a state of distress upon the road, for want of funds to carry him forward! And this perversity exists in a work of the greatest English writer of the eighteenth century! It is now known that Pope alone contributed twenty pounds of Savage's allowance. Such liberality from a successful to an unsuccessful literary man, was surely as praiseworthy as it is uncommon.

While secluded in the west of England—residing, after all, chiefly in Bristol, and there acting much as he had done in London—Savage quarrelled with many of those concerned in the pension, whom, it would appear, he only thought illiberal because they did not give him whatever he wanted. He would have returned to London, but never could save or keep enough for the journey. By degrees the unhappy wretch wore out the patience of all who had befriended him in the western capital, and then fell into actual want. Arrested at length for a debt of eight pounds, he spent the last months of his parasitical life in the most appropriate manner possible—a dependent on the bounty of his jailor. A short illness carried him off in Bristol jail in 1743, and he was buried, also appropriately, at the expense of his last patron.

So concludes this strange story. It is of course of no consequence, as a matter of literary history, how an obsolete poet of the worst age of English verse lived or died. But it is of great consequence how the tale of such a man's life is narrated. I venture to affirm that it has been narrated by Johnson in a manner which outrages all propriety, and has no excuse but the imperfect one, that the author, though himself a virtuous man, had been fascinated by the society of one unworthy of his regard. He tells enough to condemn Savage for ever—as that he 'appeared to think himself born to be supported by others, and dispensed from all necessity of providing for himself; that he retained hatred longer than good-will; and that, when a friend had trusted him, he considered himself as discharged by the first quarrel from all ties of honour and gratitude.' Yet he can coolly add, within the next two pages, 'No wise man will presume to say, had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived better than Savage.' There is, indeed, a sounding conclusion which has been often quoted, expressing a belief that the narrative will not be without its use, 'if those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, shall be reminded that nothing will supply the want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.' But this is the one drop of vinegar amidst hosts of honied palliations. And after all, it goes not to the root of the matter. Want of prudence, and negligence, and irregularity, are not phrases which can express what brought Savage to contempt and misery. He was wholly an untrue and unworthy man. For what is it that constitutes goodness? Is it not mainly the ratio in which self-indulgence has been avoided, self-control been practised, and self-sacrifice encountered for kindly social objects? If so, see what title Richard Savage has to gentle consideration—a man who acted upon heedless impulse all his days, who hardly ever was indebted for a mouthful to his own honest industry, and who, while looking to others for everything, never denied himself a single pleasure which he could obtain. Even the excuses on the ground of his unfortunate origin, become absurd when we consider, on the other hand, that nature had given him abilities superior to the generality of mankind. They become still more ridiculous, as referring, not to a person of tender age, which is perhaps the common impression, but to one who advanced through the whole period of life's prime, and died at forty-six. The whole strain of Johnson's narrative is therefore,

in my humble opinion, false and dangerous. And there is no saying what fatal effects it may have had in affording self-justifications to subsequent men of talent disposed to lead idle and profligate, rather than sober and industrious lives. I am myself surprised to have this to say of a work of Samuel Johnson; but since I am led to think so, it would be cowardly to pronounce otherwise. Nor is it necessarily an assertion of personal superiority to one of our greatest men, thus to arraign and condemn his moral views. I believe that I write in the light of an age superior to that of Johnson, and only speak what hundreds of honest writers of our day would say, if they chanced to read with any care the Life of Richard Savage.

R. C.

THE HEROIC WIFE.

WHEN the revolutionary tribunals were established in 1793, Monsieur Duportail's name was one of the first which figured on the list of those suspected, who were to undergo trial, if the formula gone through on such occasions could be called such, and which so quickly sent its victims from the Conciergerie to the scaffold. M. Duportail had many titles to proscription, among which might be numbered his being steward of the royal farms, and an upright honest man. He had been married about three years to a lady he had brought from Martinique, by whom he had two children: mutual affection, and all the happiness that wealth can bestow, centered in his household when the Reign of Terror commenced.

Having fortunately received intimation of the threatened danger, he quitted his dwelling a few hours previous to the arrival of the revolutionary emissaries, and secreted himself in the house of an old domestic in the faubourgs. The same evening his wife joined him. In expectation of such an event, she had, a few days previously, collected what money and valuables were in her possession, regulated the affairs most pressing, and prepared everything which she deemed necessary for a sudden departure.

'We must instantly leave Paris,' said she; 'a carriage containing the children waits for us; and if we reach Bourdeaux, we can easily conceal ourselves in my father's house until an opportunity offers for embarking for Martinique.'

M. Duportail, unable to comprehend the extreme peril of his situation, endeavoured to dissuade her from her resolution; and it was only when she implored him for their children's sake to flee, that he at length consented to leave Paris the next day.

During the evening, the old servant having gone out to reconnoitre, returned with the startling intelligence that every conveyance was strictly searched at the barriers, and that many persons endeavouring to escape had been arrested. The good fortune of his wife in procuring two passports did not tranquillise him; and aware of the surveillance which existed in every town through which they would have to pass, he determined on pursuing another course, which would at least save her the misery of being a witness of his arrest.

The next day he met the carriage at the appointed hour, and after some persuasion, prevailed on Madame Duportail to leave Paris accompanied only by the children, promising that he would immediately quit the city on foot, and disguised. Once safe outside the barrier he hoped he might be able to procure horses, and rejoin her at Bourdeaux, or possibly on the road.

As was expected, on reaching the barrier the coach was stopped, and at either side appeared a sinister countenance, surmounted by the red cap. 'It is a woman!' exclaimed one. 'Who are you?' demanded the other.

Madame Duportail tendered her passport, and after a short scrutiny, the order was given to proceed. With a lightened heart she continued her route, each moment hoping to be overtaken by her husband: but vain were her expectations. Hour after hour passed in feverish anxiety, her only solace being the caresses of her children.

dren. On arriving at Tours, there was no intelligence of him: the same disappointment awaited her at every town through which she passed. On reaching Bourdeaux, she immediately drove to her father's residence. 'My husband?' was all she could utter, throwing herself into her parent's arms.

'Your husband! Unhappy child, you are not then aware of his arrest?'

'Arrested! Where?—when?'

'At Paris on the 9th of October.'

It was the very day of her departure. Though stunned by the intelligence, she quickly recovered herself. 'Tell me all. He is arrested, but is he still living?'

'He is; but every day these monsters judge, condemn, and—'

'Leave the horses to the carriage!' exclaimed the young wife; 'or rather get fresh ones: I shall instantly return to Paris. I must save him—I shall save him!'

All remonstrance was unheeded, nor would she even allow her father to run any risk by accompanying her. The only delay to which she consented was while he went to procure a letter from an old acquaintance to a member of the Convention, who, besides having some influence himself, happened to be the confidant of Danton, the then minister of justice. Leaving the children with her father, she retraced her route, and, nearly exhausted, arrived in Paris eight days after M. Duportail's arrest. Without loss of time, she sought the deputy for whom the letter was directed; but on inquiry, was told by an old portress at the lodge that he was from home.

'I shall wait for him,' said Madame Duportail.

'As you please,' replied the old woman; 'but where will you stay?'

'I shall remain here,' replied madame, terrified by the insolent tone of the speaker.

'In the rain! You must be an aristocrat, then, for they are capable of anything. Our deputies have enough to do, I warrant; for they are beset from morning till night with petitions.' With a malicious glance she passed into the lodge.

Thus left to herself, the young wife could not avoid reflecting upon the situation in which she was placed; and though, under other circumstances, she would have shrunk at the idea of visiting a man unknown to her, she was too much absorbed with the thought of her husband's peril to heed it at that moment. A glance at her travel-stained dress, and a fear that her appearance in such plight would have an unfavourable effect on the mind of her protector, made her hesitate as to whether she should remain; but no time was allowed for consideration, for at that moment a gentleman, dressed in ball costume, carrying some papers in his hand, descended into the court.

'Here is the deputy, young lady. I find that I was mistaken in saying he had gone out,' exclaimed the portress, chuckling as she emerged from the lodge, yet half afraid that her falsehood might get her into trouble.

Madame Duportail presented the letter to the stranger, who, glancing at the writing, and then at his visitor, requested her, with an air of constraint, to come into the house. On opening the letter, and perusing it rapidly, 'I am going to the Convention,' said he, 'and have no time to lose: this letter tells me who you are, and is sufficient to make me do all in my power for your husband. Oblige me by coming up stairs.' He led the way into an elegantly-furnished apartment, the furniture of which bore evident traces of the Revolution. The pictures were surmounted by armorial bearings, some of the subjects being devotional, while others represented battle scenes, in which members of the royal family were conspicuous: the room evinced all the luxury of a noble mansion of the old regime.

Having handed his visitor a chair, the deputy seated himself before a table covered with papers and pamphlets.

'Madame, I fear that Citizen Danton is at present in the country, but I shall give you a letter which must be delivered to him by yourself on his return.'

'Will his stay be long, monsieur?'

'A few days.'

'But, monsieur—' 'The scaffold will not await his return, she would have added, but her voice failed, and she burst into tears.

'He may perhaps be here to-morrow,' said the deputy, as he commenced writing. Her eyes followed the pen in its movements, and with difficulty she restrained herself from sobbing aloud. 'There,' added the deputy, as he folded the letter, 'I am confident my friend will be satisfied that I have done all that lay in my power, as he has demanded. I am happy in having rendered you this little service,' continued he, as he rose and politely presented the letter.

Madame Duportail had also risen. 'Do you think, monsieur, that Citizen Danton will take pity on me?' she asked in an almost inarticulate voice.

The deputy regarded her for a moment silently, and with a scarcely perceptible smile replied, 'I have no doubt of it.' He made a few steps towards the door, but returning, added, 'Be sure to deliver the letter yourself.'

They descended the stairs, and the deputy, making a profound salute, rapidly traversed the courtyard. Madame Duportail followed more slowly. It was only then that she was struck by the peculiarity of the look which accompanied the injunction to deliver the letter in person, and she felt some misgivings as the idea arose in her mind that there was a mystery linked with it which she could not fathom. While walking along the street, her attention was excited by a stenorian voice exclaiming, 'A list of the execrable conspirators who have been condemned by national justice to suffer to-morrow morning.' She shuddered as she tendered a piece of money to the man, who, handing her one of the papers, continued his route, uttering his funeral cry. With a palpitating heart she glanced over the list, which contained the names, ages, and rank of the victims whose doom had been pronounced; but her husband was not among the number. 'He still lives,' was the wife's silent ejaculation. But who could speak for the morrow? The remainder of the day was passed in gleaning information respecting the prisoners: her husband, she learned, was incarcerated in the Oratorio.

The next morning she went to Danton's house. The citizen minister still slept. On her return some hours after, she was told that he had left town. 'Where has he gone?'

'To Auteuil,' was the reply of the domestic, in a tone of impertinent familiarity.

This suspense was dreadful; but her hopes again rose when, on consulting the public lists, her husband's name did not appear. The following day, changing her dress so as not to be recognised by the valets, she inquired for Danton. The minister was in his office, but could not be disturbed. Entering a cabaret at the opposite side of the street, from whence the house was observable, she called for some wine. The woman of the shop, interested by her youth and beauty, and rightly guessing that some other motive than that of drinking wine induced her to remain so long, strove by her attention to lessen the young wife's grief. The evening fell, and thanking the woman for her kindness, Madame Duportail, with the energy of despair, boldly entered the minister's hotel. On the domestics endeavouring to prevent her going beyond the courtyard, she showed the letter, mentioning its being from Citizen R—, and the necessity of its immediate delivery. The deputy's name acted like a talisman, and she ascended the grand staircase. Servants were hurrying to and fro, and in the confusion she reached the door of one of the upper apartments, from whence the sound of boisterous mirth proceeded. She was here accosted by a domestic, who inquired her business. Without making

a reply, she endeavoured to pass him, in which she partly succeeded, but recoiled with terror at finding herself in a brilliantly-lighted apartment, where a number of men were seated around a supper-table. The noise occasioned by her entry attracted the attention of a man with square high shoulders, his hair in disorder, and wearing a ribbon at the breast of his coat, who angrily demanded the cause.

'Citizen minister, it is a woman.'

'Ah, she wishes to see me, I suppose? We must attend to the ladies,' added he, coming forward and endeavouring to assume an air of politeness.

Madame Duportail lowered her eyes as she presented the letter, which Danton opened and perused.

'Madame Duportail, my colleague has already spoken of you: we must look after this affair.'

'You know, monsieur, how pressing it is.'

'Yes, yes, I know all about it,' replied Danton, as he rudely gazed at her.

'Monsieur, one line from your pen—'

'Assuredly: we shall see: but I cannot allow so pretty a woman to depart so soon. I have a few friends with me, but there need be no ceremony. Favour us with your company. Come!'

A dizziness seized her, as she entered the room, on perceiving that the eyes of all the guests were directed towards her. 'I present you, madame, to the friends of whom I have spoken; they will be delighted, I am sure, at seeing you amongst them,' said Danton as he handed a chair, which she, however, removed some distance from the table.

'Will you not, then, honour us by taking supper?'

Madame refused by a gesture. For a time her presence seemed to throw a constraint over some, while others continued their conversation, glancing at her with looks of impertinent curiosity. Danton alone addressed her, endeavouring from time to time to persuade her to join them at table. During supper he drank deeply, and now and then joined the conversation which was passing around him, his stentorian voice, when he spoke, drowning all others. A discussion at length arose, which was put an end to by Danton's health being proposed and drunk.

'To the Republic!' shouted a voice at the lower end of the table. The glasses were immediately filled, while the eyes of all were turned towards Madame Duportail.

'This time, I am sure, you will not refuse to join in the pledge with these brave gentlemen: the wine is of the mildest description.'

'I suspect,' said one of the guests, 'that it is not the wine she fears, but the pledge which the toast carries.'

'I'll wager that she does not voluntarily drink to the nation,' remarked another.

'Confound this hesitation!' exclaimed Danton impatiently; 'prove that you are a good patriot, and worthy to figure at table with the principal members of the Convention.'

Madame Duportail's agitation was excessive; but a sense of danger recalled her presence of mind, and taking the proffered glass from Danton, she replied, 'I shall drink to the nation with pleasure.' On her pledging the toast, the plaudits of all were vociferous.

'We want nothing but music to complete our enjoyment,' said a young man, addressing Danton.

'True, very true; I love music passionately, though I do not understand three notes. One would imagine that, with such a voice, I should sing well; but in my younger days

"The woods with echoes rang
From the tone in which I sang."

While all laughed at the quotation, he leant gallantly towards Madame Duportail. 'With such a charming countenance, you must have a divine voice. Do you sing?' A reluctant affirmative escaped her lips. 'You will sing, then?' added he; 'but we must procure a harp.'

Madame Duportail, pale and indignant, and with the sensitive feelings of a woman, though she felt that the life of her husband might perhaps depend on her acquiescence, endeavoured, when the harp was brought, to excuse herself; but those by whom she was surrounded seemed to take a fiendish pleasure in the misery they were inflicting.

'Will you refuse me, then?' said Danton half aloud. 'Take care, madame; recollect it is the first favour I have asked.'

Having sat down before the harp, with a trembling hand she played a prelude, and sang with tolerable composure one of the favourite songs of that period, which Danton applauded with ecstasy, and obliged her to repeat. The effects of the wine became every moment more perceptible on all. Several coarse jests were hazarded; and at length became of such a nature, that she arose, under pretext of requiring air. 'Very well,' said Danton in a brusque manner, and without leaving his chair, 'you can wait for me in the neighbouring apartment.'

She was conducted by a valet along a corridor into a room, the walls of which were hung with costly pictures. In the centre, strewn with papers and writing materials, was a table from which in all likelihood had emanated those fearful warrants of death which had made so many hearths desolate. Such was the involuntary thought of Madame Duportail; and as the idea smote on her heart that her husband's condemnation might at that moment be lying before her, she was seized with a vague feeling of terror, and sank powerless on a chair. The sound of boisterous mirth caused her frequently to start, and her apprehensions were further increased by perceiving that the candle was nearly exhausted. She had been nearly two hours alone, when a domestic entered, bearing a lighted candle in each hand. 'When shall I be able to see the minister?' she asked in an agitated voice.

'He is coming,' replied the man, as he deposited the candles on the table and retired. At the same moment a door at the opposite side of the apartment opened with a shock, and before the young woman uttered the cry which rose involuntarily to her lips, she recognised Danton, who, staggering into the room, threw himself on a chair. He was without his cravat, and the frills of his shirt were disordered, and stained with wine. On perceiving his visitor, his inflamed countenance assumed a maudlin expression as he exclaimed, 'Ah, is it you, citoyenne?'

The injunction of the deputy, when giving the letter, flashed vividly across her memory.

'I shall surely die of apoplexy!' muttered the minister in a maudlin voice; 'that is, if they give me time. These suppers are very pleasant, but—the morning!'

Madame Duportail's terror changed to agony at the thought that he might be too inebriated to write, and hastily approaching him, she exclaimed, 'Citizen minister, you surely have not forgotten the promise you gave me?'

'Ha! What do you say?'

'The letter you are to write—the grace you would accord me at the recommendation of Citizen R—the life—the life of my husband!'

'Well, it is but necessary to erase his name from the list—that is to say, to remove it from the bundle.'

'What bundle?' exclaimed the wife with feverish anxiety: 'Where is it?'

'Give me air. I am stifled!'

Not daring to go within reach of the drunken monster, she ran and opened the window.

'That Robespierre is a scoundrel—he never drinks unless it be blood. Baptiste, undress me!'

'Monsieur—monsieur!' interrupted the young woman, 'where is this bundle—this list? Give it me.'

Danton turned with impatience to the other side, and growled, 'Call Fauquier; he knows where it is: or take it yourself, added he, pointing to an escritoire, the nests of which were filled with papers.

Following his directions, she quickly stood on a chair, and commenced her researches. 'Carton A?' asked she in a voice trembling with anxiety, taking down a lettered bundle.

'I ask pardon, my dear, for my gaiety. I feel obliged to R—for having sent you. Do let me hear another chanson; you sing so divinely.'

For a moment she remained silent, but perceiving that he was again falling into a lethargy, she once more broke silence—'Carton B?'

'What's his name?'

'Duportail.'

'Duportail!—Carton A!—Carton B! Seek then in D. How stupid you are, my dear! You amuse me with your Carton A!' added he, giving way to a burst of laughter as he sunk back in his chair.

Without loss of time she took the bundle of warrants marked D, and opening the string, hastily perused the name written on the back of each. Her husband's was the third; the warrant bore the minister's signature, and his execution was to have taken place the following morning. Securing the paper with an inward thanksgiving, she moved forward to thank Danton; but seeing that his eyes were closed, noiselessly glided towards the door, and disappeared.

The next morning, with the warrant in her possession, she found little difficulty in getting Duportail's name erased from the jailer's book, and she and her husband were soon on their route to Bourdeaux, where, reunited to their family, they sailed for Martinique. At the Restoration they returned to France; and the Heroic Wife is, we believe, still alive.

EDUCATION OF IDIOTS AT THE BICÊTRE.

SECOND ARTICLE.

THE means of educating the juvenile idiots at the Bicêtre, as formerly mentioned,* consists of a variety of exercises likely to rouse the dormant capacities of the pupils. Some of the exercises, not already described, consisted of marching in various figures, as arranged by small ornamented flags. These evolutions seemed to impart much pleasure.

The next series of exercises, though less attractive as a spectacle, were probably equally useful, if not more so, as a means of exciting attention and compliance with the particular directions of the instructor. At his request each pupil held up first the right hand, then the left, then both hands. Subsequently, the right hand was ordered to be pointed to the right side, and then to the left; the same also with the left hand: the corresponding leg and arm were now required to be advanced, then those of the opposite side; and lastly, they were desired to kneel and rise again at the word of command. They then embraced each other, and remained standing two and two in an easy and graceful posture, producing an appearance of mutual good-will and friendship. Indeed it is more than probable that the mere assumption of such attitudes may become the means of exciting some small share of fellow-feeling and attachment between the different members of this singular community. These various positions and motions of the limbs were simultaneously performed by the whole of the pupils at the instant the order issued from their preceptor.

A large mat was now unrolled, and placed in the centre of the room, when various gymnastic exercises were entered upon by several couples. At this time it was especially gratifying to witness the amount of observation and attention excited in the bystanders, as was manifested by their hearty laughter, whenever a failure or accident happened. As only a few could be engaged in these gymnastics, the rest were left to their own discretion, and in a little while they became

distributed in various parts of the room: the majority, however, remained watching those at play, others loitered near the musicians, touching, with simple curiosity, the various instruments which had performed an important part in leading and guiding their feeble and wandering faculties. Before entering on the next series of instructions, it was desirable that the whole should assume an orderly demeanour, and they were accordingly required to arrange themselves, and prepare to march round the room. Having done this once or twice, they were ordered to halt opposite the seats placed ready for them; then desired to be seated; each taking his place at once, and all seeming ready to attend to their next lesson.

Several pieces of wood, cut in the shape of different geometrical figures, were now brought into the room. These were placed in the hands of different pupils, who named with much readiness the various forms—as round, square, oval, oblong, &c. In order to exercise the sense of touch without the aid of that of sight, a bandage was placed over the eyes of one or two, and the different pieces were put into their hands, when each of them slowly passed his fingers along the edges, and when satisfied with the examination, named the form of the respective portions. In doing this, no error was committed. The utterance was of course imperfect; but although the words were pronounced in what to the visitors was a foreign tongue, no difficulty was felt by the other pupils in distinguishing what was said.

A large black board was now brought forward and placed on a rest. One or two of the more proficient were desired by M. Vallée to draw upon it first a horizontal, then a perpendicular line, and afterwards to describe a circle, square, and hexagon. Words also were well and readily written in a good round legible hand. The same feebleness and uncertainty of grasp, arising from an imperfect power over the fingers, was again observable, but the writing was fairly executed, and the figures correctly described. They were slowly done, it is true, but still they were well done. Remarking that the compasses used in describing the mathematical diagrams had a movable hinge, I was surprised to observe, that although there was so much apparent unsteadiness of muscle, yet such a degree of adjusting power over the motion of the fingers had been acquired, that the various points necessary to form the different figures were marked on the board without causing the least variation in the limbs of the instrument.

One of the more elderly of the pupils, but one who in England would be called a hopeless idiot, was now brought forward. His whole appearance and expression previous to the moment when he was desired to approach the table, were indicative of an utterly hopeless, mindless object. Being raised on a seat, a set of dominoes were placed before him, the sight of which caused evident signs of pleasure, and he proceeded to make preparations to enter on the game. Although having a very imperfect control over his hands, he selected from the set the required number, arranged them, and played a game with his instructor. This was done deliberately, but without any faltering or inaccuracy; and during the progress of the game he showed signs of satisfaction or discomfiture, according to his success or otherwise. The efforts to overcome the congenital imperfections in this poor fellow were strikingly successful; and it is not improbable that, had they been undertaken at an earlier period of his life, a capacity of standing in the erect position and of walking might possibly have been obtained. In addition to other educational exercises, patient and continued efforts had been made to create in him a power over the various muscles constituting the organ of voice. Although only capable of slow, imperfect, and irregular utterance, he named the various letters of a word placed before him, first dividing them into syllables, and then pronouncing the word. I subsequently saw him, at a later part of the day, seated in the workroom amongst his fellows, usefully employed in making very excellent

* Journal, No. 120.

list slippers. As I approached his bench, he evidently showed signs of recognition, and seemed pleased at the notice taken of his work. He handed me several pairs of slippers which he had finished, then showed the one he was engaged with, entered on his work again, and looking up from time to time as he proceeded with it, evinced the pleasure he felt in his employment, and the gratification he experienced in finding that it interested and met the approval of others.

The attention of the pupils assembled round a table was now directed to a large sheet of paper, on which was painted every variety of colour. These tints were disposed in a confused manner, so as to prevent the liability which otherwise might arise of mere rote work, or the utterance, from habit, of consecutive words without comprehending their meaning. In this, as in all the other educational arrangements, the attention of the pupil was first directed to the simple and the more striking parts. On this occasion, consequently, the primitive colours were first named, and last the more compound, between which the shades of distinction are less marked. The perfection to which the sense of sight, the power of discriminating nice differences of colour, and of remembering and uttering their respective names was brought, in some of the pupils, was truly surprising.

Several examinations in the names of objects were now undertaken, such as the various articles of dress and pieces of furniture. Following these, the number of days in the week and months in the year were given; then the names of each day and month, as well as the seasons of the year. The replies to these questions relating to names of objects and periods of time were quickly and readily given; and had I not already witnessed so many evidences of the excellent system of training of which these poor fellows have had the advantage, I should have been inclined to doubt whether a proper comprehension of their meanings was attached to the several words they uttered. I had, however, sufficient reason to believe that, to a limited extent at least, they understood what was meant when they gave answers to the questions proposed.

Instructions as to the relation of objects to each other were now entered on. A small box being placed on the table, one of the youths, at the request of the master, first named the different parts of it—top, side, bottom, &c.; and subsequently the relation of objects as respects position in regard to it. For instance, when anything was placed upon it, the word 'sur' was given, and so also 'sans,' 'dedans,' &c. according as the little object was put in these various situations in relation to the box. Here was an evident advance on the other exercises, showing an increased capacity of comprehension. The simple, natural, and easy way in which such knowledge was communicated, was at once strikingly applicable, and was also admirably calculated to excite the mental faculties, by extending the very limited range of comprehension bestowed on these unfortunates.

A model clock was now brought out. It was constructed so, that the relative position of the fingers could be altered at pleasure. Under the direction of the tutor, the different hours of the day were indicated, as well as the fractional parts of an hour. The face of the clock, thus varied, was presented to several pupils, when the time was correctly and exactly stated by each. During the progress of these examinations, several of the boys advanced from the main body who had remained seated around the room. The few who thus left their fellows gathered round the table, and seemed to take interest as well as pleasure in the proficiency manifested by their brethren. Every now and then they approached the place where I was seated, and looked up inquiringly, as if desirous to know what I thought of their proceedings. That they were capable of entertaining such feelings, was made evident by several simple occurrences excited by passing events during my stay among them. Some amount of interest in each other was also shown, and the extent to which care was exercised by the improved

over the more ignorant and wayward was undoubted. I was particularly struck on one occasion by the manner in which an elder boy led back to the seat his younger and more restless companion, in whom the system of education had not yet produced that power of self-control which most of the boys had attained. The youth who rendered this service to his neighbour had attracted my notice when I first entered the room. He presented every appearance of an idiot of the most hopeless class to such a degree, that I singled him out as one worthy of particular observation, with a view of ascertaining how far the functions of an intelligent being could be imparted to one apparently so forlorn. I may here mention, that at a subsequent stage of the proceedings this same boy advanced to the table, and appeared to take an interest in what was going forward. Observing a small note-book I held in my hand, he took it up, opened it, and after turning over a few leaves, returned it to me, as if his curiosity was satisfied.

The mode of communicating ideas of numbers, and of their corresponding signs (figures), was as simple and successful as the methods adopted of imparting a knowledge of the properties and positions of objects. The result of their tasks in this department showed how applicable such a system was to their feeble understandings. Several circular pieces of ivory were first placed on the table, and then divided into two unequal portions, so as to communicate the idea of quantity by requiring the pupils to say which was the larger and which the smaller portion. A certain number were then placed together, say three or four, and the question was asked—How many are there? The answer being given, the attention of the pupil was directed immediately to a board on which were painted the figures, and opposite to each figure a corresponding number of circular spots of the same size as the pieces of ivory. He here saw the figure placed opposite the number of pieces before him, and the idea of number was produced: thus several sums in addition and subtraction were now undertaken, and in the execution of these, the board was sometimes used as a means of fixing attention and assisting the memory. The more proficient, however, readily replied to the various questions put to them without calling into operation the aid of the sense of sight. They answered correctly, and without hesitation, such questions as—How many do 6 and 8 make? Take 3 from 9, and how many remain?

I was particularly struck with the burst of feeling produced in one of the junior pupils when foiled in the performance of his task. He was seated at the table on which were laid the pieces of ivory. These were first divided into two unequal portions, and he was requested to point out the greater and the smaller set. Three of the circles were then given to him, and he was desired to take from the others an equal number. Having performed these tasks, an even number were placed before him, with the request that he would divide them into two equal portions: this he proceeded to do by taking out very slowly and carefully the half of the number. An uneven number, consisting of nine pieces, were now given to him with a like request: this he tried to comply with as before, by separating four on each side; he then hesitated, re-examined his numbers, seemed perplexed, and at length finding, after a little pause, that he could not perform what was required of him, he burst into tears, and showed, by the difficulty which was experienced in assuaging his grief, how deeply he was capable of feeling both disappointment and vexation at his supposed inefficiency. This little incident told plainly of an important influence brought into operation. It explained how much could be done by acting on the *amour propre*. The grief at discomfiture, as well as the pleasure excited by success, showed that this power was used as a key to unlock dormant faculties, and to open the portals of intelligence.

My attention was now directed to a youth in whom the greatest difficulty had been, and was still expe-

rienced, in preventing a wandering and irregular action of the mind. Ideas of numbers, and a capability of counting, had been imparted to him; but unless his attention could be fixed by a simultaneous exercise of some of his senses, or by muscular movements, it was found difficult to induce him to advance from one number to another. Thus, when he was desired to count 1, 2, 3, &c. his eyes were bandaged, a triangle was held before him, and struck at regular intervals of time, so as to lead him on from one number to the next at each beat of the triangle. A ladder being placed against the wall, he was desired to mount it, and count at the same time: this he did regularly and slowly, naming an advancing number at each step he took. Other gymnastic exercises, I was told, had been employed with a view of fixing attention, and producing a more regular succession of ideas. The ingenuity and aptness of the means used in this particular case speak eloquently of the spirit in which the work of regenerating these all but mindless fellow-creatures is undertaken.

The series of exercises in the schoolroom was terminated by the construction of words, and the addition of figures, by means of letters and figures cut out and fixed on small portions of wood. A word or a number being given by the master, the pupil proceeded to select the letters or figures, and place them in the order indicative of the word or number. This lesson was executed with the same accuracy which had characterised the various proceedings which it was my good fortune to witness in this schoolroom at Bicêtre, and which served to excite within me a deep feeling of thankfulness for the opportunity I had enjoyed of becoming practically acquainted with the system in operation. As each successive and advancing demonstration was made before me of the extent to which the senses and faculties of these idiots had been educated, I could not avoid feeling a corresponding increase of the delight I at the first moment experienced in witnessing a sight so intensely interesting and important.

THE AGE OF FUN.

EVERY age claims to have a character of its own. This is the age of railways and jocularities—a curious combination, which no one could have predicated in that very sober state of affairs twenty years ago. England is decidedly getting into a hurry. We have no time now to be grave. We must go ahead as fast as possible, and by all means keep ourselves laughing by the way. How did all this come about; is the fashion imported or indigenous? Are other nations as busy in joke-making as we are? It is pleasing to know that they are, and that with a liberal hand they occasionally send us some of their own good things to laugh at. The caricature engravings at present stamped by the national taste to pass as laughable, afford an instance. We used to rally the French upon their unconsciousness of this kind of humour, and with great justice; for the utmost they could do to provoke cachinnation was to stick an enormously disproportioned head, with distorted features, upon a Lilliputian body. The French, however, persevered, and the consequence has been, that our own artists have now adopted the idea. I do not know a single illustrated book of the comic class of the present year in which it is not predominant. The joke consists in the preternatural ugliness of the face, and the impossible contortions of the limbs. We are expected to laugh at what in nature we should turn away from with pity, loathing, or horror; and since it is a joke, we do laugh at it with all our might. Some artists of course pay attention to the legitimate drollery of expression, attitude, and situation; but in general they are satisfied with attempting to surpass each other in hideousness. The expression 'out of drawing' was formerly used in

criticism, but as regards this department of the fine arts, it is now entirely obsolete. Indeed the less a caricaturist knows about anatomy and physiognomy, the greater chance he has of arriving at distinction.

This, I need hardly say, is a mere peculiarity of the day, which will probably be entirely exploded before another New Year; but fashion is perpetually working little miracles of the kind. Sometimes it affixes its stamp to a particular expression, which straightway passes current as a jest, without possessing in itself the faintest meaning of one kind or other. There is one occurs to me just now which, in London, I never knew to fail, in or out of the theatre. It is used as a reply to a request, or as a remark on some expressed wish or longing, and consists of the simple words, 'I wish you may get it!' This talismanic sentence, whether pronounced in the street, in a private company, or on the stage, invariably creates a laugh, although the farce or song of which it may have been the catch-word—if it really had any origin of the kind at all—exists no longer even in tradition. I select this one, however, merely because it has continued longer unimpaired in force than any other I remember. The Londoners are always catching up some saying from the stage, and repeating it long after its parentage is forgotten. It signifies nothing that the associations which conferred upon it its jocular character are lost, it continues to pass as a joke on its own account. The instinct of imitation takes place of the perception of humour; and it circulates like the monosyllable 'ha!' in the philosophical game of 'Forcing a Laugh.' The reader knows that this is played by sending the supposititious fun round, gauntlet fashion, among the company; the leader beginning 'ha!' his neighbour instantaneously echoing 'ha!' the next passing it to the next, and so on—'ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!'—till the result is a continuous roar.

The Americans, we believe, are no great jokers with the pencil; but there is a length and breadth about their literary perpetrations altogether peculiar. The physical aspect of their country seems to be reproduced in their drolleries, which have a character of vastness, wildness, and emptiness that baffles the imagination. A little book I have my eyes upon just now—and which I mean to lay hands upon presently—attempts to civilise these gambols of the Infant Hercules into the walking pace of a ladies' school. It will give the jokes of the new world, forsooth, a European meaning! And why? Because there is no wit in them as they are popularly reported. Why, who cares about wit in a joke? Whether it is wit, or the want of it, I should be glad to know, that makes people laugh? Commend me to the big American, who was so tall, that he was obliged to go up a ladder every morning to shave himself! There is no wit in that, I hope. It is a piece of sublime absurdity, as unadulterated as the Falls of Niagara. It sets the fancy at nought as completely as when you attempt to grasp the idea of Lake Superior. Try that little book, and you will find that, by no mental effort, can you picture to yourself anything more than a millpond. Compare this joke with the hail of the young chimney-sweep in Fleet Street to the gigantic barrister, 'I say, mister, putting his black paws to his mouth, trumpet-fashion, while he turned his face to the zenith—'I say, mister, ain't it werry cold up there?' This is good—but we can understand it. It is European.

A farmer had a scythe so exceedingly sharp, that, having hung it upon the bough of a tree on a moonlight night, a poor man passing by had his leg cut off by its shadow! This is given as a specimen of American wit; but I say it is as genuine and immeasurable a Jonathanism, as the feat of the man who chased a flash of greased lightning three times round a field; or the rapidity of the gentleman's gig, in which the friend, seeing the milestones so crowded, inquired what churchyard they were passing through? The real wit, when it exists at all, belongs entirely to another world. The Americans were born too late to have any of their

own; it was all used up by their European ancestors. Take, for instance, a specimen quoted in the little book:—'A man in Kentucky imitated the crowing of a cock so perfectly, and sometimes indulged in the freak so early in the morning, that upon one occasion the sun in mistake rose two hours before its proper time.' This is only an imitation of a mistake that was made long ago by the identical sun—not to talk of any higher antiquity—and is much better related:—

'Take, oh take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes—the break of day—
Lights that do mislead the morn!
But my kisses bring again—
Scals of love, but sealed in vain!

The little book I have alluded to is called 'Irish Diamonds,' by John Smith, late lecturer on education and geographical science.* In this, of itself, there is a rich antithesis between the mock and the true, the grave and the jocular; and the promise of fun thus conveyed in the title-page is fulfilled in the book. But the title is better (by way of a joke) than antithetical; for it is morally impossible to think of Mr John Smith as a lecturer, or anything else in particular. There is a puzzling uncertainty, a poetical indistinctness, a shadowy mystery about the name, which beats Jonathan hollow. The nearest approach we can make to the identity of Mr John Smith, is to picture him as one of the forty gentlemen who, in the pit of Drury Lane theatre, were seen clapping on their hats, and making for the doors from all quarters, when a voice was heard calling out at one of the entrances, 'Mr Smith is wanted!'

The book is a cluster of brilliants, chiefly Irish, of old material, but shaped and polished by Mr Smith, and set in metal of his own, sometimes genuine, and rarely with much alloy. I do not see, however, that his theory of Irish wit and blunders throws any new light upon the subject, or that the theory is at all assisted by the diagrams intended for its illustration. In these diagrams the English arrow (of thought) is seen flying horizontally to the mark at the other side of the room; the Scottish arrow turning cautiously round in the middle, as if to ascertain that it is in the right path, and then arriving at the same object; and the Irish arrow darting away diagonally, either to the upper or lower corner, and striking out a flash of wit in one, or an amusing blunder in another. This proceeding of the Irish arrow, we are told, is not caused solely by hurry or precipitation, but likewise by an antipodean habit of the people—a love of opposite extremes and contrasts, a delight in applying the contrary end of the telescope of thought. But this habit, in its application to blunders, is not national, but universal, and is *always* the consequence of precipitation, or the acting or speaking without thought. Speaking for myself, if I have two things in my hand, and am called on suddenly to drop one of them, I *invariably* feel an inclination to drop the wrong one, and this is only corrected by the counter-habit of thinking what I am about. The predisposition to error here is caused by the thought instinctively flying to the more valuable or needful object at the same moment when the necessity presents itself for dropping something. A gentleman stands by the fire, with an egg in one hand and his watch in the other, observing a saucepan. Suddenly the saucepan begins to boil, and, obeying the instinct of his anti-mathematical nature, he pops his watch into it instead of the egg. There is nothing out of the way in this, supposing him to be a person who does not attach reason to the boiling of eggs any more than to other things; but when he stands with the egg in his hand, watching how his watch boils, the incident is taken out of the category of practical blunders, and becomes a specimen of absence of mind. All, however, is set right again by the conclusion. He holds the egg in his hand for *three minutes*. This is the

point of the jest, and we may laugh with a good conscience. We all blunder occasionally from want of thought, and the Irishman more frequently than any of us, owing merely to the quickness of his temperament and his aversion to mental discipline. The same quickness may lead him more frequently than other people to a witticism as well as to a bull; and in my opinion, his reaching the one rather than the other is, in nine cases out of ten, the result of mere accident.

The following specimen of the antithesis in which the Irish are supposed to delight is not new, but it is well worth repeating:—

An Englishman is never happy but when he is miserable;
A Scotchman is never at home but when he is abroad;
An Irishman is never at peace but when he is fighting.

I shall now quote, in the words of Mr Smith, an instance of precipitation of thought, which is the *ne plus ultra* of an Irish bull. 'A jovial, good-humoured, and industrious commercial traveller, a native of the Green Isle, though he felt much fatigued by a hard day's duty in a country town, resolved, whilst enjoying his evening glass at the fireside of the inn, that, deep winter as it was, he would make an early stage in the morning by a coach passing through the place, and which would reach his next scene of business by breakfast-time. He named this project in presence of several of his brethren of the road, and gave orders to "boots" to call him just in time for the coach, and no sooner, as he would make his toilet in the next town, where he should arrive by daylight. Having paid his bill, and feeling that all was comfortably settled, he sat till rather a late hour in the warm room, where the fumes of a cigar or two from his neighbours probably contributed to his dropping fast asleep. Some of the party, taking advantage of his condition, carefully blacked his face. By and by he became wakeful enough, though still very drowsy, to find his way to bed. In the morning "boots" awoke him exactly in time; and hastily huddling on his clothes, he was soon in the coach, where, darkness being still around, he was soon again asleep. In a couple of hours the coach pulled up at the inn, and he was shown, in the gray light, and with candles still visible here and there, into the gloomy breakfast-room, when, after gaping and stretching, he took up a candle, that he might look at himself in the glass, and turn up the hair from his forehead, when, utterly astounded at the black and unknown visage he there beheld, he shouted out lustily, and in a tone of sudden alarm, "Why, by the powers, if boots hasn't awakened the wrong man!"'

Comment upon this would only spoil it. The absurdity is carried to a pitch of the sublime which it is perhaps impossible to surpass. Horace Walpole's favourite bull, in which a man is represented as bearing ill-will against his nurse for having changed him when a child, may be said to confound personal identity in the same way. But it wants the suddenness which is the charm and the naturalness of the other. We think of the Orford blunder, losing ourselves in its unfathomable depths; but the other gives us no time to think, but startles us at once into a shout of laughter. It is the suddenness, too, which makes it Irish; for in point of fact a similar idea occurs in Don Quixote. An Irishman would be the last person in the world to talk nonsense, if he gave himself time to think: his blunders are always, and his 'diamonds' sometimes, the result of mere haste.

The English have usually been represented as bad makers of bulls, but no one can now say they don't execute a vast variety of very funny sayings. Their fun, in fact, has become a staple article of literature; and on the whole—and here is the good feature in its character—it is not a wicked, or a personal, or a bad-minded fun: it has its faults, but, generally speaking, it is enlisted in the cause of what is estimable. With this tribute to its merits, however, I would take leave to hint that things are getting on at too great a rate. The fun is getting so 'fast and furious,' that, like a steam-

* Irish Diamonds; or a Theory of Irish Wit and Blunders; combined with other kindred subjects. By John Smith, one of the editors of the 'Liverpool Mercury,' &c. Chapman and Hall.

engine which has lost its governor, it almost threatens to knock the whole apparatus of literature in pieces. I hope our good friends the funny fellows will kindly look to this. The world should have a little repose in the midst of its jocular evolutions: if it has not, I fear it will be found one morning soon to have actually split its sides with laughing.

MUSEUM AT COPENHAGEN.

[Mr Kohl, whose tour in Great Britain we noticed some time ago, has recently published his *Travels in Denmark*. His volumes will probably not be deemed of sufficient interest to the English public to cause them to be translated; nevertheless there is a good deal of information scattered through them. The following is an abridgment of one of the chapters.]

THE museum of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen is one of the most remarkable museums in the world; and indeed it may be called unique in its class, if we consider the richness of its stores. Since it was founded in 1807, there have been formed several similar museums in Mecklenburg, Stockholm, Christiana, and by private persons in Scandinavia; but all these collections are poor in comparison with the one at Copenhagen. It reflects great credit on the Danes, that they should have taken the lead of the European nations in the investigation of local antiquities. It is perhaps to be attributed, however, to the circumstance of their being a nation much devoted to historical and legendary lore, as well as to the fact, that primitive times are much nearer to them than to any other civilised people. It is manifest, from the utensils of stone discovered here and there in Italy, Greece, Spain, &c. that in these lands also dwelt barbarians, unacquainted with the use of metals, who made stone instruments serve their purposes. But doubtless metals were introduced much earlier in the south, and therefore fewer stone implements would be committed to the ditches and morasses for preservation; and when found, such rude things would be little esteemed, and therefore destroyed.

There have existed in Denmark for more than a hundred years societies for the study of Danish history. The society for the cultivation of northern history and languages was founded in 1744. From a member of this society, the librarian, Nyerup, a man well known for his historical and literary writings, first proceeded the idea of a national museum, and he was soon joined by Bishop Mûnter. By the exertions of these two men, the attention of the public was directed to the old barrows (tumuli) and their neglected contents. People began to collect, to dig, and to preserve. The students of the establishment founded by Christian IV. were aroused to a sense of the value of antiquities by Nyerup; and when they were afterwards scattered over the country, they took along with them a love of such things, and were useful in getting together a great number of objects. At length a royal commission issued, with the design of preserving all northern antiquities in Denmark, and a correspondence was entered into with learned men, clergymen, schoolmasters, &c. inviting them to forward intelligence of any ancient remains that had been found, and, if possible, the objects themselves. Formal instructions were drawn up, printed, and circulated, to carry out the purposes of the commission, and the government lent its aid, by adopting other judicious measures, particularly by notifying that the discoverer of any antiquities in gold and silver would be paid the value of the metal, notwithstanding they belonged by law to the king. Other indefatigable antiquarians trod in the footsteps of Nyerup, and in 1825 the Royal Society for Ancient Writings was incorporated, which took the museum under its protection. The activity of this society has been most laudable. Its influence has not only been felt in all Scandinavia, but all through the northern extremity of the earth—Russia, Great Britain, Northern Germany, the Netherlands, and North America. Members of it, learned and influential men, reside in all these countries, and it has a consider-

able income. In the course of a twenty years' existence, it has not only increased the museum to a great extent, superintended its removal to the castle of Christiansburg (part of which was lent to them by the king), and put the whole into admirable order, but it has also issued a series of very rare and important works relating to the history of the north. These valuable works comprise about sixty volumes, which, without the labours of the society, would in all probability have never been laid before the world, the cost of publication being greater than the profits of the sale. Amongst them are found—1. The Historical Saga of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, in the Icelandic, Latin, and Danish tongues. 2. The Mytho-historical Saga of the North before the Ninth Century, in Icelandic and Danish. 3. The Heroic Poem concerning the Deeds and Death of King Regnar Lodbrog, in Danish, Latin, and French. 4. The Historical Saga of the Inhabitants of the Faroe Islands, in Icelandic, Danish, Faroish, and German. 5. The Historical Saga of Iceland. Two of the latest and most remarkable works issued are, 'The Historical Monuments of Greenland,' and 'American Antiquities; or, Northern Writers on America before Columbus.' Both of them have thrown great light upon the history of the new continent; and the latter has clearly proved that, long before the time of Columbus, North America had been discovered by the Greenlanders.

The society is divided into sections; as the Asiatic section, which is devoted to the investigation of the relations of Asia to ancient Scandinavia; the Russian section, &c. A special committee is charged with the duty of attending to the increase and support of the museum. Their memoirs are published in Danish, German, French, and English; and a periodical, with essays on the history, archaeology, and philology of the north, is also issued. These publications are for the most part only accessible to the learned. But in order to keep alive the interest of the people in antiquarian matters, they have proceeded to issue short popular papers on such subjects. The consequence is, that additions to the museum are continually pouring in from all parts of the country; and as the names of the donors are published in the official gazette, the public is made acquainted with the progress of the institution, and with those who are interesting themselves in it. The collection has thus become very important. Considering, however, that it is but twenty years since its formation, during which time not half the barrows in Denmark have been opened, and that the extensive morasses and bogs are depositories of antiquities which in a thousand places have not been disturbed by the spade and plough, we may readily infer that great riches have yet to be added. No doubt many, very many valuable pieces of antiquity have been now irretrievably lost, but certainly, during the forty years' existence of the museum, an astonishing number of gold crowns, rings for the head, arms, and fingers, &c. have been brought to light. Some of these gold articles contain more than a pound of pure gold. Whole chests of amber ornaments have been brought together; and one discovery alone in Jutland produced 3400 pieces of amber, pearls, and other objects.

The museum is arranged in historical order. It commences with things of the Age of Stone—when the Scandinavians were yet ignorant of metal; when they slew their game with stones, felled trees, plained them, sawed them, and bored them with stones; when a stone served for a razor, for ornaments, and instruments of war. Many of these stone articles have been wrought with a labour truly wonderful. Knives, with handles richly adorned, and with keenly-sharp edges; arrow-heads, incomprehensibly thin and fine—these were the result of an art which the ancient artists in stone practised with ease, but which is lost to us. An antiquarian friend of mine told me he had offered a sum of money to a stone-cutter to make him an arrow-head in the old style out of a piece of flint, but it could not be done. It is surprising that they do not obtain a man from

some country where the art is still in being, at least to show them what the mode of working is. It surprises me also that engravings are not made of the most remarkable barrows, since there are many which, when engraved, would form very suitable ornaments for the museum. There need be no fear of such a collection of drawings looking uniform and monotonous, for the difference of situation and accompaniments would prevent this. One lies in the shade of noble beeches, another on the shore of a fiord, a third on a wild desolate heath, a fourth on the summit of a hilly ridge: sometimes a village church stands between two, sometimes one is planted round with gigantic stones.

A great part of the earth's inhabitants are yet in the Age of Stone, and we are here permitted to compare the productions of to-day in that line with ancient specimens. We see here the workmanship of the Greenlanders, of the South-Sea Islanders, and of the American Indians; and it is really remarkable what similarity prevails throughout between these and the Scandinavian productions. Two thousand years, or two thousand miles, might separate the labourers, still there is extremely little difference to be perceived between the vessels and implements of trade in shape, use, or make. They all seem to be turned out of the same workshop. Of some objects the visitor sees complete suites, as well as a great number of varieties of the same class grouped together. For instance, there are hundreds of hatchets small and large cut out of flint, serpentine, porphyry, and other minerals. There are also arrows and darts of all sizes, and shapes, and material. We are likewise shown suites of things in various stages of manufacture. Thus we see the block of flint out of which a little oblong fragment has been splintered to form the head of a lance. One sees the surface whence it has been taken, the fragment itself, the instrument inflicting the blow by which the severance was effected. Then we are shown such a fragment upon which the workman has bestowed some labour, but only half-completed his work; then a perfect lance-head; and lastly, one that has been used in battle or in the chase, and has got damaged. There are the grindstones upon which the points of arrows and the edge of hatchets have been sharpened. There are many long fragments or chips of flint which are very remarkable. They are often quite thin, an inch broad, and six or seven inches long. They look exactly as if they had been cut away with a knife when the stone was soft; for they are somewhat bent, like chips of wood. Yet connoisseurs affirm they were separated by a blow from the parent block. Still, the uninitiated, when they find nothing of the sort can now-a-days be done, are sceptical.

After the relics in stone, those in bronze and copper, with which some rooms are occupied, catch the attention. Copper and gold are the metals which have been almost everywhere first discovered. They are both more easily obtained, melted, and worked than silver, iron, and other ores. There is here a very extraordinary number of bronze swords, poniards, axes, rings, chains, buckles, saws, drinking utensils, spoons, scales, and other things, of which the neatness, taste, and beauty of the workmanship are quite astonishing.

It has been said that civilisation smooths away all peculiarities from different races, and that all nations are becoming more and more alike. In support of this position, it is usual to cite the uniformity of dress and other matters that is extending year by year, so that people of different nations are not distinguishable from external appearance. The old national costumes are disappearing from all nooks and corners of the world, and one sees the same kind of coats, waistcoats, and cravats, the same furniture, and similarly-disposed rooms, wherever we go: and no wonder, when we consider the great and ready intercourse which the world now enjoys. In this northern museum, however, we learn that even in the old times there was such a universal fashion in Europe in many things, as there is now in clothes and furniture. The old bronze swords and poniards, for in-

stance, which are dug up in the north, have precisely the same form and ornaments which are found in Thrace and Macedonia, or in the barrows of Troy. It might be thought that the Trojan and Scandinavian weapons had been executed by the same person, so strong is the similarity. Now, this is remarkable, when one remembers the few roads and means of intercourse which Europe then possessed. They show in this museum a round and artistically-wrought shield of bronze, which gives a very high idea of the skill of the old smiths. Perhaps it may have inspired some ancient scald, as the shield of Achilles did Homer. The barrows which were erected on the shore of the Hellespont to Hector and Ajax, are exactly like the barrows which commemorate Odin, Thor, and other Scandinavian heroes. Such things prove, it seems to me, that the European nations had formerly a more intimate acquaintance with each other than we usually allow them; and this intercourse generated a uniformity in the spirit of the age.

It is impossible to say in what century stone-work gave way to copper and bronze. No doubt there was a period when all were used—a kind of transition age. Many learned men believe that shortly before the birth of Christ there was an emigration from the south to the north, and that the use of iron then became known. We see here bronze implements which have been edged with iron, as if it were something costly—a bronze dagger, for instance, fortified with an iron edge; a bronze hatchet, to which a rim of iron has been riveted, &c. There are many specimens of iron implements from heathen times. The want of silver articles is somewhat strange, when the collection is so rich in gold.

I was particularly interested with the runestaves and other old runic writings, of which so many have been discovered in various countries. A French gentleman, who lately published a work on the Germans, makes himself merry with that nation for tracing out, as they conceive, evidence of a derivation from them amongst all other people in the world. The Gascons, Burgundians, and Spaniards, are attempted to be shown to have German blood, and the mountaineers of Crim Tartary and the Caucasus are supposed to have marks of a common origin in their light hair; whilst to the inhabitants of the country about the African Atlas, the Germans stretch out a hand of brotherhood, because they are considered descendants of the Vandals. The Slavonians, inspired by nationality in the same way, detect Slavonic names amongst the villages of Germany, find Slavonic names of cities in Italy, and delight themselves with the old alphabet—the far-famed Testament of Rheims. The Scandinavians do the same thing with reference to their runes and other northern monuments; and from this zealous patriotism history has derived much advantage. Not only in all parts of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, not only in Northern Germany, Iceland, and Greenland, but also on many rocks of North America, have runic carvings been discovered, copied, and interpreted. It is true that the interpreters have occasionally quarrels with the naturalists, because these latter attribute to diluvial scratching what the former take to be runes. However, in most instances the antiquarians have carried the day. Even Italy has not been an unproductive country for runes and Scandinavian remains. A manuscript of the ninth century has been found in Naples, in which the northern deities, particularly Odin and Freia, are represented; and what is very remarkable, a line of scribbled signs, which some inspectors declare to be runic, have been discovered round the body and back of the lion in St Mark's Place, Venice. A cast of these characters is in the museum; some of them have been deciphered, but others are perfectly unintelligible. It is to this day an enigma how the signs got upon the lion's body.

Large as the museum is, it is rapidly increasing. Seven hundred new specimens were sent in one year lately, but four hundred or five hundred per annum is

the average rate of increase. So splendid a collection could only be formed where an active spirit of patriotism is stirring amongst the people. Their love of their country and of ancient things is manifested in the shops, where the booksellers deal largely in Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian literature; and there are many establishments for the sale of antiquities—old curiosity shops.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

THERE is a skeleton in every house—something secretly tormenting—so says the Italian proverb; and we can well believe it. Our skeleton consists in the supposed obligation to read all the letters which the postman so obligingly brings us every morning—on Monday twice as many as on any other day.

What are all these letters about? On the same principle that father confessors are heard to say that they do not remember one word out of a whole day's self-accusatory depositions, we can scarcely give any reasonable account of these epistolary revelations. Some are modestly asking questions which it would require a sitting magistrate or a Highland oracle to answer. Some are abusing us as everything that is bad, because, as it would seem, we dare to think differently from their learned writers on subjects of great public concern; as, for example, because in the fifteenth line of page seven in a late number we had the audacity to spell *color* colour; or because, in speaking lately of a certain brown butterfly, we said it had eight legs instead of six. No one but an idiot, they tell us, could have made such mistakes, and they would advise us to go back to school! How happy the writers of these 'ticklers' must be after dropping them into the letter-box! In contrast with these snappish and generally anonymous correspondents, we would place those who, writing with temper, are not afraid to append their names to their suggested corrections. Of this latter class the following is an agreeable specimen:—

Electric Telegraph, Derby, Dec. 25, 1846.

GENTLEMEN—I have just read a paper in the 147th No. of your Journal, "Whimsicalities of the Electric Telegraph." You will perhaps excuse my directing your attention to that portion of the article which is quoted from *"the Globe,"* stating that the small birds which frequently congregate on the wires receive shocks when the instruments are in action. This is the common opinion, but allow me to suggest, that it is necessary that the bird form a part of the circuit, or it cannot be acted upon by the electricity. In our system of wires, the current passes from terminus to terminus along the wire, and returns by the earth. If we attach the most delicate galvanometer to a wire along which the current is made to pass, no effect is observed till we also connect it with the earth, and complete the circuit. Thus no bird can receive a shock, unless it is tall enough to stand on the ground and touch the wires; and even if such a monster were to attempt experimenting, the feathers of its head, and even the horny skin of its feet, would not act as conductors, unless well wetted.

I have the inspection of above two hundred and thirty miles of line, or more than one thousand miles of wire, and I never saw any effect of the kind, nor have any of our staff on other lines. Birds, however, are frequently found dead under the wires. I have seen a wing hanging on them, and on searching, have discovered its owner on the grass below. Our men have frequently seen partridges fly across and kill themselves, not by a shock of electricity, but by striking themselves forcibly against them. I am sure that your well-known anxiety to afford the most correct information on the subjects which you notice, will afford me an excuse for thus trespassing on your patience.

Between Norwich and Yarmouth I have often seen two hundred or more sand martens on a wire whilst the

instrument has been in action, sitting as contentedly as possible: in fact the wires are a very favourite perch for these birds. During thunder-storms, even on short lines, the needles are violently affected, and the bells ring incessantly.

Another very general but erroneous idea, even among the better order of folks, is, that the humming Æolian harp-like effect of the wind on the suspended wire is caused by the "messages passing." Some even say they can tell when a train is coming by the noise.

On all long lines some inconvenience is experienced by an occasional deflection of the needles, which change from left to right rapidly, and frequently perhaps four times in ten minutes. At first sight, it would seem to be merely the effect of an atmospheric current of electricity passing along the wires from the clouds to the earth, and *vice versa*; but there are many cases which cannot be explained on this theory. No effect seems to take place unless the wire is connected at each end with the earth.

At Derby we have four lines, which diverge respectively to Normanton, Lincoln, Rugby, and Birmingham. In forty-nine cases out of fifty, if the first two instruments are deflected to the right, the last two point to the left; sometimes all are alike. The left-hand end of the galvanometer coil is in each instrument connected with the suspended wire, the right-hand end with the earth, so that a similar current passing along each wire would cause all the needles to point one way. And why, then, do they move in pairs so generally?—I am, &c.

R. S. CULLEY.

The next class of contributors are poets, and they are the most numerous of all. No one but the editor of a literary periodical can have the slightest idea of the number of persons who write, or suppose they write, verses. One day when we have time, we mean to do justice to this meritorious order of geniuses, by presenting specimens of their claims to immortality. We shall not have more than a hundredweight of note-papers to look over. Meanwhile, to be serious, we would earnestly commend the too prevalent practice of wasting time in versification, in which mediocrity is not only intolerable, but profitless.

Contributors of prose are not a large body, and their aims are usually less romantic than poets, and come nearer the kind of material we require. A few writings are good, some are bad, but the penmanship of many is so confused, that we really are not able to read or give any opinion on them. This leads us to impart some advice—editorial, worth their weight in gold, to all aspirant contributors. They are these:—Write in a large round hand, and only on one side of the paper. Inscribe your name and address on every article. Don't expect the article to be returned, if unsuitable, because to send back formally all the papers forwarded, would occupy a most unreasonable portion of time. If you wish to preserve what you have written, keep a copy. By attending to these rules, you will greatly oblige not only us, but all editors whatsoever. The thing that worries the unfortunate race to which we belong, are the numerous letters requesting the return of papers of which they have no recollection, and which are lost amongst a mass of contributions put aside as unsuitable.

We have pleasure in stating a somewhat curious circumstance connected with prose contributions. Apart from the papers of professed female writers, considerably more articles suitable for our purpose are contributed by ladies in Ireland than in England; while very few of any kind are sent by ladies in Scotland. It may add interest to this unexpected announcement to state, that the greater number of the Irish ladies who furnish acceptable contributions are either the wives or daughters of clergymen of the established church. It is at any rate a strange fact, that a number of these pages are filled with material from beyond the Shannon.

The last class of contributors whom we need mention, are persons of both sexes who sympathise in our efforts at social melioration, and hand us accounts of what

they or others about them are doing in the same cause. Some of the letters of these parties are exceedingly interesting, for they reveal the breadth and depth of the operations now in progress for cultivating hitherto waste and neglected intellect. They also often show how much good may be done by only a small sacrifice of time, trouble, and means. The following extract from a letter, received a few days ago from a gentleman in Chester, will convey an idea of this species of activity:—

The writer begins by asking the gift of any spoiled copy of a work on mathematics, in order to give it to a poor lad whom he has gratuitously taught, and inspired with a thirst for knowledge. As an argument in favour of his claim, he goes on to say, 'During the whole of last winter I gave gratuitous instruction to as many of the excavators employed in the formation of the railways in the vicinity as chose to avail themselves of it. The average nightly attendance was about fifty; and during that period three hundred men, the greater number of whom were in a state of entire mental destitution, received elementary instruction. The whole of them learned to read and write; many acquired also the elements of arithmetic; and nearly fifty of them, among whom was the young man above referred to, made so great a proficiency, as to justify the hope that it would have a decidedly beneficial influence on their future career. I may add, as another result of my labour of love, equally gratifying, that thirty-five men, previously very intemperate and dissolute characters, took the pledge of total abstinence. I have occasionally presented copies of your books to individuals who I supposed would value them; but as my means are limited,' &c. A copy of the book was sent.

The following letter from a young man, the librarian of a Self-Improvement Society at Uxbridge, speaks for itself.

'Stn—Some few weeks ago you inserted in your Journal a short account of the Uxbridge Young Men's Improvement Society; that insertion has conferred a benefit upon that society which the members will not soon forget, and for which, lacking more suitable means, we now most respectfully and sincerely tender you our grateful acknowledgments. Within a very short time of the publicity thus given to our proceedings, we received a number of letters from different parts of the country in reference to that account; some congratulating us upon our prospects, some inquiring for our rules, and further particulars; whilst, in two or three instances, there were offers of assistance, in the shape of London and other newspapers, to be sent a day or two after publication by the post. And here I would state that, by a curious coincidence, one of our members had a West Indian paper sent him a few days back, in which he saw an account of his own society, as copied verbatim from your Journal, although the person who sent it had no knowledge of his being a member. These things, sir, you may rest assured, did not pass unheeded by us—they stirred up the feelings of the coldest hearted; we one and all felt it would be a shame and disgrace, indeed a lasting stigma upon us, if, after having been thus honoured by and through your means, we did not strive with all our might to render ourselves every way worthy of that honour.

A general meeting of the members was at once called, at which it was resolved to have the rules printed, a copy of which I have taken the liberty of forwarding for your inspection. A public tea-meeting was next resolved upon, to be held on Tuesday, October 6, and which, by the kindness of some persons in authority, we were enabled to hold in a large room over the market-place; for you must know, sir, however large we may appear in print, we have at present but a small room to meet in. Fifty-five persons sat down to tea, which we begun and finished by singing a verse of thanksgiving. After tea, a public meeting was held, at which R. Wilkinson, Esq. a gentleman well known in the town, presided, and commenced the business of the

evening by congratulating us upon our prospects, enrolling himself as a member, and presenting ten volumes of useful works to the society. The report was then read, by which it appears that we have, during the last twelve months, nearly doubled our members, together with the number of our books; that we are at present in good working order, and bid fair to gain the respect and good wishes (for aid we do not ask, except in books; as it is a maxim with us to create as far as possible in the young men a feeling of self-dependence) of the influential portion of our neighbours. A number of books were then formally presented to the society, among which were two volumes, strongly bound, of "Chambers's Information for the People;" "Life of R. Burns;" "Walker's Dictionary;" "Crossley's Intellectual Calculator," &c. According to the plan laid down, the meeting was then addressed by several young men, members of the society, who, apparently to the satisfaction of the audience, made up in zeal what they lacked in experience. Mr Stamper, the Independent minister, very kindly patronised us, by speaking for about ten minutes during the latter part of the evening. At a quarter to ten o'clock we broke up; most of the young, and indeed many of the older folks, declaring they had not spent so pleasant an evening for a long time. We have at the present time eight or ten persons to propose as members, all shopmen; a likelihood of getting a suitable room in the Town-Hall for a constancy; with other advantages too tedious to mention; and all through what we can most justly say the impetus given to us, just in the nick of time, by your insertion of that account; for you must know that your Journal is well circulated in Uxbridge. That it may long continue to flourish, and be the means of stirring up the same spirit which it has done among my fellow-members, is the sincere wish of

E. AUSTIN, Librarian to the Society.

Of the necessity for instituting societies of the above nature, and, above all, for teaching people to read works of even an ordinary description, we have an example in the following communication from a lady in Norwich:

'I have been asked to-day, by a member of a District Visiting Society in this city, whether you publish any serial tracts calculated for a lower grade of intellect than your "Useful and Entertaining Miscellany." My friend says, that in all the houses of the poor belonging to her society (a congregational one) I should either find your Miscellany lent to or read to the poor, but that often there come numbers which they cannot understand; and she wishes you could put forth a *lower* series. I know much of the poor in the country, and I have long thought that a light magazine, with a little natural history, domestic management, anecdote, sober poetry, and plain-sense morality, would be a treasure to many a fireside. I have vainly endeavoured to persuade booksellers that such a work is wanted. The only one who saw the want would not join me, because it required canvassers. Pray think of this. I fear, or hope, your intellectual Scotch labourers are not aware of the appalling ignorance of our farm-servants. Our artisans are rising; but alas for the condition of our peasantry! They seem to have no one to stir them up, nor can they stir up themselves.'

The suggestion to write and publish a series of tracts in language suitable to a child-like understanding, with a view to the instruction of English peasantry, is no doubt humane, but, like many other good ideas, it is impracticable as a matter of private enterprise. No peasantry, we fear, not even those of Scotland, buy books of general instruction or amusement; and if the truth must be told, the lower classes, so called, in towns, buy nearly as little. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the humbler order of manual labourers buy our sheets. In vain do we try to reach them with our literature; in vain cheapen tracts to the verge of being non-productive. There are of course exceptions to the rule; but the fact is well known to booksellers, that it is the better class of tradesmen, and middle classes of people generally, who buy nearly all the cheap publications

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whatsoever. That this is not altogether owing to an indisposition on the part of the operative classes to possess themselves of these publications, but is in a great measure a consequence of existing and ineffective processes of distribution, we shall afterwards attempt to show in a separate article on the subject.

THE DOG OF BRUSSELS.

Does the reader love dogs? If he does not, let him skip this article, for with the dog-hater I have no sympathy. But to some one, methinks, the question will bring back the remembrance of his own faithful Dash, whose delight on the first important day of partridge-shooting was not less evident than that of his master. Or perhaps some single gentleman, who would yet be far from willing to class himself among the fraternity of old bachelors, will give a kindly glance at the little rough wire-haired Scotch terrier, his constant companion by night and day. A mother, too, may look with kindness at the old Blenheim spaniel, which, averse to the caresses of strangers, and discouraging too great familiarity from the seniors of the family, will patiently endure the closest hugging from her baby boy, and return with gentlest love the somewhat rough and teasing fondness of the elder urchins. How well does she remember the day when her wild rosy-cheeked Frank, emancipated from the control of his teacher, whom he somewhat disrespectfully designated a 'she-governess,' in all the independent manliness of his eighth summer and first cloth jacket, ran down to the river to fish for minnows. His only companion was the brave Newfoundland, Neptune, which sat gravely on the bank, watching with a philosophic eye the progress of his young master's sport. Suddenly the boy leant over the bank, the treacherous oar gave way, and the bright curly head was plunged beneath the waters. It was but for a moment; for when the terrified herdsman, whom the child's wild scream had drawn to the spot, came up, he saw the boy's dress tightly grasped in Neptune's powerful jaws, and the dog's massive fore-feet firmly planted on the bank, where his master's child was soon laid in safety. Poor Neptune is now old and feeble; the most he can do is to crawl on a fine day from his nook near the kitchen fire to the sunny step before the hall-door. There he lies, certain that his mistress and her daughters will never pass him by without bestowing a gentle pat on his head, and a bit of soft cake, which he can still masticate. But when the midsummer holidays come, and the fine tall lad, who is to enter college 'next half,' bounds towards the door, then the poor old fellow rises with unwonted alacrity, and something like the sparkle of former days gleams in his dim gray eyes as he meets and returns the caresses of his dear young master Frank.

But let me come, without further preface, to a true anecdote with which I became acquainted during a visit to Brussels in the year 1837.

After visiting many of the interesting objects which that pleasant capital offers to the notice of strangers, my companion and I turned our steps towards the Chamber of Deputies. The building is extensive, and occupies three sides of a square, the fourth being open towards the parks. There is a large smooth court in front, which forms a pleasant promenade; but in one corner of it, and somewhat marring the stateliness of the scene, I noticed a common little wooden dog-kennel, which I supposed to belong to a watch-dog. Humble as was this little tenement, it was connected with an incident, of which I had the following history from my loquacious conductress. 'Here,' she said, 'in this Place was the fiercest fighting in the revolution of 1830; for several days after the battle the ground was red with French and Belgian blood.'

Just then a shaggy-looking dog, somewhat resembling a large terrier, but, as I thought, an ugly specimen of his race, walked slowly towards us. He looked good-natured, and I stooped to pat him.

'Ay,' said the old woman, 'madame may caress him now with safety, as he is not on the spot.'

'What spot?' I inquired; and in reply she told me the following anecdote. 'In the revolutionary army that assembled to oppose the Dutch, who invaded our city in the month of September 1830, was a young French officer, who, wherever he went, was followed by the dog you see. The poor lad was in the thickest of the fighting on the fatal 21st, and fell, covered with wounds, on a spot which I will show you.'

She led me towards the centre of the court, but the dog went before, and lay down near a smooth stone, looking up at us with an expression of fierce defiance in his eyes.

'Ah, poor fellow!' said the old lady, 'we're not going to disturb you. Don't go near him, madame, while he's there. That was the spot where his master's dead body lay, and he sat beside it, licking the bleeding wounds. At length it was removed for burial, but the dog followed it, and stayed for three days beside the grave. At the end of that time he returned here, and lay down where you see him now, growling savagely, and attacking any one who tried to dislodge him. Some of the people about beat him with sticks, and drove him away; the next day he returned, but was again cruelly hunted off. When he came back for the third time, he was worn to a skeleton from fatigue and hunger, and looked as if he would never rise again from his master's death-place. My husband and I had gone away for a while, or we would not have suffered the creature to be ill-treated; but one of the directors, who is a very humane man, chanced to pass by just as a rabble of boys were preparing once more to torture the poor faithful dog. He immediately dispersed them, and having inquired into the circumstances connected with the animal, he ordered that he should never be molested; that the kennel which you see should be built for him; and procured a small sum to be allowed weekly for his maintenance. He soon recovered his strength, and you may see by his appearance that he is taken good care of. Indeed he is well known in the town; and the little masters and misses that play in the park delight in bringing him sweet cakes, of which he is very fond. However, they know very well that although he is as gentle as a lamb while he is walking up and down, they must never attempt to touch him when lying on his chosen spot, from which, indeed, he never stirs in any direction farther than about a hundred yards. Many of his young friends have tried to entice him to a greater distance; and we have sometimes allowed him to be hungry, and then coaxed him on with his most favourite food; but in vain. He always turned back, and lay down where his master fell. Seven years have now passed away, but it is still the same; the dumb creature never forgets!'

During my stay at Brussels I often walked by the place, and never missed the dog from his accustomed haunt, nor saw him pass the self-imposed limits mentioned by the good woman. Her story was confirmed to me by others, so that I can see no reason to doubt its truth. I do not know the name of the dog of Brussels: his faithful limbs have no doubt long ere now mingled with the dust, but memory often recalls the story of his enduring love.

Perchance the tidings of his young master's fall brought darkness to the chambers of some vine-covered cottage of France—robbed fair faces of their smiles, and covered graceful forms with the garb of woe. They wept and lamented; but a year passed over, and the brothers and sisters laughed and conversed as before. The vacant place of the dead was no longer heeded, and his name had become an unspoken word. Another year, and his fair affianced one had consented to become another's bride. No tear in that bright eye, no shadow on that smooth brow, now told that even one sorrowing thought ever turned towards his lonely grave.

Years still passed on, and even in the widowed mother's heart the memory of her soldier boy waxed dim.

She did not forget him quite, and often some trifling object or event would serve to renew her grief. But at other times she could sit and smile, pleased and contented, as though that sharp sorrow of bereavement had never been felt. The brothers and sisters had each other still—the fair betrothed had another lover—the mother had many sons—the dog had but one master. Fond and faithful to the end, with constancy that knew no change, that dumb creature's cold vigils on the stone at Brussels put evermore to shame our vaunted human love.

IT'S NOT FAIR.

THE following piece of drollery is extracted from 'The Barmala Foaks an' Fogmoor Olmenack, for 1847, be Tom Treddlehoyle, Esq.'—an almanac in one of the provincial dialects of England, and therefore a curiosity in its way:—

'It's not fair for a chap to cry "cockles alive," when at the same time he naws them all dead.

'It's not fair, when onny boddy goaze to a groacer's shop to bye coffee, and thay gie em it hauf chlickery an mahogany sawdust.

'It's not fair, when you goa for a stoan a flaar at hauf a cran, an they gie yo that at two an tuppance.

'It's not fair, when you goa for hauf an a bacea, an thay weigh't paper we it.

'It's not fair for a chap at sells milk, to goa tut pump before he goaze tut cah.

'It's not fair, when a woman goaze to buy a bit a tea, te hev sloe leaves an black-lead amang it.

'It's not fair for a dressmaker to put folks off, be sayin at thave sum mournin cum in, when at same time thave nowt at soart.

'It's not fair, when a bairn goaze tut public-house for a penarth a yist, an't landlord or't landlady tells it they hev noan to spare, cos it father duntz goa an drink thair.

'It's not fair for a chap at macks hats, ta print or write "waterproof" it insides on em, when at same time he naws at thale run like a riddle.

'It's not fair for a woman at goaze to a bye butter, ta scrape abit we hur thum-nail off a ivery hauf pound homaat at thair iz it market.

'It's not fair for gentlefoaks, when thay want a job doing, to hurry it be sayin at thave sum company cummin, when at same time thay nowt at soart.

'It's not fair for a chap at's ridein in a railway carriage, ta hev't windaz hoppand and shut just as heeze a mind.

'It's not fair for a woman ta goa into a linen-draper's shop, an, after looking an tummalin iverything over at thair iz it plaice nearly, goa aught wethaught beyein owt.

'It's not fair for a chap ta hoist hiz umbrella aghside a coach on a rainy day, an spaught watter into ptlier foak's neck hoyles.

'It's not fair for a doektor to goa tut clurch or chappil, an leave word for him ta be fetch't aghit it middle at sarvice, when he naws he isant wanted.

'It's not fair, when a man or woman leaves a company, for them at's left ta backbite abaght am.

'It's not fair, when you go into a barber's shop to be shaived, te hev yer noaze-hoyles stopt up we hither, or hev yer chin cut.

'It's not fair ta bid onny boddy a good mornin, an at same time not mean it.

'It's not fair for a tailor allas ta want as much cloath for a little man as he dux for a big un.'

A lady suggests to us that there is one 'It's not fair' omitted, and she requests us to supply it.

'It's not fair, when you buy a reel of cotton, to find that, except a little thread on the outside, all the rest is wood.'

MANX SUPERSTITION.

The Manx place great reliance on fire protecting them from the influence of evil spirits. Not a family in the whole island, of natives, but keeps a fire constantly burning, no one daring to depend on his neighbour's vigilance in a thing which he imagines of so much importance, and every one firmly believing that, if it should ever happen that no fires were to be found throughout the island, the most terrible revolutions and mischiefs would immediately ensue.—*Troun's Isle of Man.*

HAPPINESS.

As in the sun the dewy violet trembles,
Trembles my spirit now with joy's excess,
So deep, that pain itself it now resembles,
Brimming with wordless, tearful happiness.
Oh let the incense of a thankful heart

Ascend to Heaven, as perfume from the flower,

That, seeing winter's shadow grim depart,

Lifts up its head unto the sun and shower;

Yet not forgetting, in the soft spring days,

The storms and frosts through which it safe has past;

Wearing life out in glad and loveful praise,

And calmly sinking down to earth at last,

Having its course fulfilled. Oh, then, may I

Thus thankful, hopeful live, and thus contented die!

D. M. M.

THE EDUCATION WHICH HALLOWS EXISTENCE.

A man is not to be considered as educated because some years of his life have been spent in acquiring a certain proficiency in the language, history, and geography of Greece and Rome, and their colonies, or in bestowing a transient attention on the principles of mathematics and natural philosophy; nor is a woman to be considered as educated because she can execute a difficult piece of music in a brilliant style, or speak French, German, or Italian with fluency. Such attainments require little more than mere mechanical recollection—the lowest of all the cerebral faculties; or the rapid transmission of an impulse from the sensitive optic nerve to the motor ones of the arms and fingers, which is nothing better than the instinctive movement of the animal; neither can the storing up the opinions of others, or the accustoming the tongue to the idioms of other languages, be properly termed an act of thought; for in such cases the capacity of combining ideas, of weighing and judging ere a course of action is adopted, remains even less exercised than in those who, though they are turned into the world with the mind, as it were, a *tabula rasa* to receive any impression, and too frequently a bad one, yet amid the difficulties and sufferings of poverty, sometimes learn to think. It is from the depths of man's interior life that he must draw what separates him from the brute, and hallows his animal existence; and learning is no further valuable than as it gives a quantity of raw material to be separated and worked up in the intellectual laboratory, till it comes forth as new in form, and as increased in value, as the porcelain vase which entered the manufactory in the shape of metallic salts, clay, and sand.—*Connection between Physiology and Intellectual Philosophy.*

THE SPIDER'S THREAD.

That any creature could be found to fabricate a net, not less ingenious than that of the fisherman, for the capture of its prey; that it should fix it in the right place, and then patiently await the result, is a proceeding so strange, that, if we did not see it done daily before our eyes by the common house-spider and garden-spider, it would seem wonderful. But how much is our wonder increased when we think of the complex fabric of each single thread, and then of the mathematical precision and rapidity with which, in certain cases, the net itself is constructed; and to add to all this, as an example of the wonders which the most common things exhibit when carefully examined, the net of the garden-spider consists of two distinct kinds of silk. The threads forming the concentric circles are composed of a silk much more elastic than that of the rays, and are studded over with minute globules of a viscid gum, sufficiently adhesive to retain any unwary fly which comes in contact with it. A net of average dimensions is estimated by Mr Blackwall to contain 87,360 of these globules, and a large net of fourteen or sixteen inches in diameter, 120,000; and yet such a net will be completed by one species (*Epeira apoclicia*) in about forty minutes, on an average, if no interruption occurs!—*Introduction to Zoology.*

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